

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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BLACK CAUCUS: HOUSE GOP BUDGET HITS MINORITY SCHOOLS HARDEST

INDIANAPOLIS – While a biennial state budget plan crafted by Indiana House Republicans will harm many school districts throughout the state, the greatest pain will be faced by schools in minority areas, according to members of the Indiana Black Legislative Caucus.

House Bill 1001, now set for consideration by the full Indiana House, reduces funding in many minority school districts in order to benefit more affluent school corporations, according to Black Caucus Chairman Gregory W. Porter (D-Indianapolis) and State Rep. William Crawford (D-Indianapolis), ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee. Crawford and other Democrats on the committee already have gone on record against the budget proposal.

"This House Republican budget is a disaster, plain and simple," Porter said. "Its supporters proclaim that it provides additional funding for schools, but only those schools in wealthier areas of the state. This budget does nothing to help school corporations in minority areas, apart from forcing tax increases on local property owners."

Crawford added, "The priorities of the House Republicans are clear. According to the Indiana Urban School Association, the 10 highest minority school districts will lose nearly \$26 million in state support under the House Republican plan. By contrast, the 10 richest school corporations will get an additional \$21.5 million in state funding."

The House Republican budget will particularly hinder urban school corporations, which educate nearly 90 percent of Indiana's black students, 63 percent of Indiana's Hispanic students, 40 percent of the state's special education students, and 57 percent of the students receiving free and reduced lunches. It contains a number of land mines that will have an impact on the quality of education and life in minority areas.

"The budget reduces state support for K-12, while increasing local taxpayer support by more than \$70 million," Crawford said. "In addition, the budget eliminates the minimum guarantee in support that helps all school corporations meet ongoing expenses like utility costs and insurance. It cuts the contributions that local schools make to the Teacher Retirement Fund, significantly reduces remediation support, and shorts schools on the reimbursements they receive for textbooks."

Porter said, "By not funding these areas, the House Republicans will be forcing local school officials into making difficult choices in how to maintain past levels of support. Will they have to ask for increases to local property taxes in order to make up the lost state funding, or will they have to cut programs and teachers and go to larger class sizes?

"Members of the Black Legislative Caucus oppose all of these options, because they run against the basic ideas of educational excellence that lawmakers have pursued in recent years," he continued. "It is hard to believe that House Republicans advocate giving more state funding to richer school corporations, while forcing poorer schools to increase local property taxes in order to fund programs. Our caucus will do everything in its power to bring these inequities to the public's attention, and we will fight to make sure that minority schools get the state support they deserve."

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This news release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H96